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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3025
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2890
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3537
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000734

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: OVIP PREL PGOV TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: PURPOSE OF MEREDOV'S VISIT IS TO EXPAND RELATIONS; FOCUS ON OFFICIAL MEETINGS

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) On June 10, the Charge met with Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov to discuss Meredov's upcoming visit to Washington. Meredov confirmed that he will depart Ashgabat on June 22 and travel to Washington via Frankfurt. His arrival in Washington will be in the early afternoon on June ¶22. He will depart Washington on June 24 at 1700 and return directly to Ashgabat via Frankfurt.

¶2. (C) In addition to Meredov's meeting with the Secretary, the Charge proposed a number of possible meetings including: a lunch hosted by U/S Burns, attended by other DOS officials and perhaps a NSC official; a meeting on Capitol Hill with members interested in Central Asia, either as a regular sit-down meeting or a breakfast meeting; an event hosted by the U.S.-Turkmenistan Business Council, either a business meeting or reception, or both; and meetings at the Departments of Defense and Energy.

¶3. (C) Meredov said he welcomed meetings with a broad circle of people, saying he would not avoid any such meetings. Ambassador Orazov had mentioned to him the possibility of meetings at the NSC and/or with a representative of the Administration at the White House. At a recent Cabinet of Ministers meeting, President Berdimuhamedov had clearly stated the goal of broadening relations with the U.S. Meredov was charged with activating and broadening the relationship, and suggested that his meetings further that goal in the political, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres. He expressed interest in all the above-mentioned meetings, but said it would depend on whether there was enough time in his schedule.

¶4. (C) Meredov was less receptive to the suggestion of a public speaking event at one of the think tanks or a meeting with Washington Post or Times editors. He said once, and later repeated, that, as a first visit, it would be better to focus on official meetings. However, he suggested that such an event might work in the future. He added that he would, of course, be ready to discuss any topic during his visit. He specifically mentioned international and regional political questions, the regional security situation and energy issues and asked the Charge about other themes that might be raised. The Charge listed security cooperation,

Afghanistan, Turkmen participation in the Northern Distribution Network, an increase of the overflight cap, developments in Iran and increased U.S. company access to the Turkmen energy sector. He said human rights issues such as the release of political prisoners and registration of NGOs and religious groups would also likely be raised. If the final details on the Boeing contract have not been resolved by the time of the visit, that deal could also come up. Meredov thought these were good topics for talks at the ministerial level and emphasized that he was ready to talk about any subject, and to look for ways to cooperate.

¶15. (C) In the energy area, Meredov noted that there had already been some good talks with President Berdimuhamedov (SE/EE Morningstar, Chevron, Honeywell) which indicated the direction for some U.S. companies who are ready for cooperation. He suggested that in the area of energy security and diversification of energy routes, the Turkmen and U.S. points of view coincide. He also looked forward to discussing education and science, areas in which he noted our cooperation was already good.

¶16. (C) COMMENT: It was obvious that not much preparation for the trip has taken place on the Turkmen side. While Meredov indicated willingness to engage in a full agenda of meetings, setting up the schedule will require some close coordination with the Turkmen Embassy. On the way out of the Ministry, the Charge told Americas Department Chief Serdar Bashimov that the Turkmen Ambassador Orazov did not seem to be in the loop.

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¶17. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The Charge complained to Meredov that he had experienced considerable difficulty arranging an appointment with Deputy Chairman for Transportation and Communications Shagulyev to try to move the Boeing deal off the dime. "Can't we get this issue resolved before you go to Washington?" he asked Meredov. Later that afternoon, the Charge was told that he could see Shagulyev on the following morning. END COMMENT.

MILES